

Swim Speak - Glossary of Swimming Terms

Alternate: In a prelims/finals meet, after the finalists are decided, the next fastest swimmers other than the finalists are designated as alternates. The fastest of the two being the first alternate and the next be the second.

Anchor: The final swimmer in a relay.

Backstroke: One of the four competitive racing strokes, basically any style of swimming on your back. Backstroke is swam as the first stroke of the Medley Relay and the second stroke of the Individual Medley. This stroke is offered provincially at 50 metre, 100 metre, and 200 metre distances.

Block: The starting platform located behind each lane.

Breaststroke: One of the four competitive racing strokes. Breaststroke is swam as the second stroke in the Medley Relay and the third stroke in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, racing distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, and 200 metres.

Bulkhead: A wall constructed to divide a pool into different courses, such as a 50m pool into two 25m pools.

Butterfly: One of the four competitive racing strokes. Butterfly (nicknamed fly) is swam as the third stroke in the Medley Relay and the first stroke in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, racing distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, and 200 metres.

Championship Meet: The meet held at the end of the short and long course seasons. Qualification times are necessary to enter meets.

Check In: The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded meet. Sometimes referred to as positive check in, the swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

Circle Seeding: A method of seeding swimmers when they are participating in a prelims/finals event. The fastest 18 to 24 swimmers are seeded in the last three heats, with the fastest swimmers being in the inside lanes.

Circle Swimming: Performed by staying to the right of the black line when swimming in a lane to enable more swimmers to swim in each lane.

Closed Competition: Swim meet which is open to a specific number of invitees.

Code of Ethics: A Code that both swimmers and coaches are required to sign while attending Swim Alberta camps, tours, etc.

Consolation Finals: After the fastest 8 or 10 swimmers, the next 8 or 10 swimmers in a prelims/finals meet who, after the prelims swim, qualify to return to the finals. Consolations are the second fastest heat of finals when multiple heats are held and are conducted before the championship heat.

Course: Designated distance (length of pool) for swimming competition. Long course = 50 metres, short course = 25 metres.

Cut: Slang for qualifying time. A time standard necessary to attend a particular meet or event.

Deck: The area around the swimming pool reserved for swimmers, officials, and coaches. No one but authorised persons may be on deck during a swim meet or practice.

Deck Entries: Accepting entries into events on the first day or later days of a meet.

Distance: How far a swimmer swims.

Distance Event: Term used to refer to events over 400 metres.

DQ (Disqualified): This occurs when a swimmer has committed an infraction of some kind (e.g. one-handed touch in breaststroke). A disqualified swimmer is not eligible to receive an award, nor will there be an official time in that event.

Dropped Time: When a swimmer goes faster than the previous performance they have "dropped their time."

Dry-land Training: Training done out of the water that aids and enhances swimming performance; usually includes stretching, calisthenics, and/or weight training.

Dual Meet: Type of meet where two teams compete against each other.

Electronic Timing: Timing system usually has touchpads in the water, junction boxes on the deck with hook up cables, button for backup timing, and a computer console that prints out the results of each race. Some timing systems are hooked up to a scoreboard that displays swimmers times.

Eligible to compete: The status of a member swimmer that means they are registered and have met all the requirements.

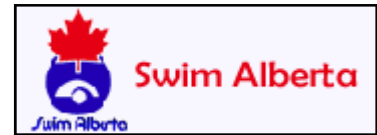
False Start: Occurs when a swimmer is moving at the start prior to the signal.

Fastest to Slowest: A seeding method used on the longer events at the end of a session. The fastest seeded swimmers participate in the first heats followed by the next fastest and so on. Many times these events alternate one female heat and one male heat until all swimmers have competed.

FINA: The international, rules making organisation, for the sport of swimming.

Final: The championship heat of an event in which the top six or eight swimmers from the preliminaries compete for awards, depending on the number of lanes in the pool.

Final Results: The printed copy of the results of each race of a swim meet.



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Flags: Backstroke flags placed 5 metres from the end of the pool. They enable backstrokers to execute a backstroke turn more efficiently through being able to count the number of strokes into each wall.

Freestyle: One of the four competitive racing events. Freestyle is swam as the forth stroke in the Medley Relay and in the Individual Medley. Offered provincially, distances are 50 metres, 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, 800 metres, or 1500 metres.

Heats: A division of an event when there are too many swimmers to compete at the same time. The results are compiled by swimmers time swam after all heats of the event are completed.

Heat Sheet: The pre-meet printing listings of swimmers seed times in events at a competition. These sheets vary in accuracy since coaches submit swimmers times many weeks before the meet. Heat sheets are usually sold at the admissions table and are used to mainly make sure the swimmer has been properly entered in all the events they signed up for. Parents enjoy looking at the seedings prior to the race plus swimmers can tell the order the events will be conducted and get a rough idea how long the meet sessions will last.

I.M.: Slang for individual medley, an event in which the swimmer uses all four strokes in the following order: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle.

Invitational: Type of meet that requires a club to request an invitation to attend.

Jump: An illegal start done by the second, third, or fourth member of a relay team. The swimmer on the blocks breaks contact with the block before the swimmer in the water touches the wall.

Kick: The leg movements of a swimmer. A popular word to yell to encourage swimmers during a race.

Kick Board: A floatation device used by swimmers during a practice. A light weight object used with great accuracy by coaches.

Lane: The specific area in which a swimmer is assigned to swim. Lanes are numbered from right (lane 1) to left (Lane 6).

Lane Ropes: Continuous floating markers attached to a cable attached from the starting end to the turning end for the purpose of separating each lane and quieting waves caused by racing swimmers.

Lap: One length of the course (sometimes means down and back).

Lap Counter: A set of plastic display numbers used to keep track of laps during a distance race. The person, who counts for the swimmer, is stationed at the opposite end from the start.

Leg: The part of a relay event swam by a single team member or a single stroke in the IM.

Length: The extent of the competitive course from end to end.

Long Course or LC: A 50 metre long pool.

Long Distance: Any freestyle event over 1500 metres, normally conducted in a natural body of water, such as a lake, river, or ocean.

Mark: The command to take your starting position.

Marshall: The official who controls the crowd and swimmer flow at the swim meet.

Medals: Awards given to the swimmers at meets. They vary in size, design, and method of presentation.

Meet: Competition designed to be a measure of progress and a learning experience. By implementing what has been learned in practice, the swimmers test themselves against the clock to see how they are progressing.

Meet Chair: The person in charge of the administration of the meet.

Metres: The measurement of the length of a swimming pool that was built per specs using the metric system. Long course is 50 metres and short course is 25 metres.

Middle Distance: Term used to refer to events of 200 to 400 metres in length.

Negative Split: Swimming the second half of the race faster than the first half.

No Time (NT): The abbreviation used on a heat sheet to designate that the swimmer has not swam that event before.

Official: A judge on the deck of the pool at a sanctioned competition who enforces SNC rules.

Official Time: A time achieved in a race during a duly sanctioned competition.

Omega: A type of automatic timing system.

Open Competition: Competition which any qualified club or swimmer may enter.

Pace: The often pre-determined speed with which a swimmer completes each segment of a race (e.g. 25m, 50m)

Pace Clock: Large clock with a large second hand and a smaller minute had, used to check pace or maintain intervals in practice (may also be digital).

Positive Check In: The procedure required before a swimmer swims an event in a deck seeded or pre seeded meet. The swimmer must mark their name on a list posted by the meet host.

Practice: The scheduled workouts a swimmer attends with their club/team.



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Prelim: Slang for preliminaries, also called heats – those races in which swimmers qualify for the championship and consolation finals in an event.

Prelim/Final: Type of meet with two sessions. The preliminary heats are usually held in the morning session.

Pre-seeded: A meet conducted without a bull pen in which a swimmer knows what lane and heat they are in by looking at the heat sheet or meet programme.

Proof of Time: An official meet result. Swimmers/Coaches must present proof of time with some entries.

Psyche Sheet: An entry sheet showing all swimmers entered into each individual event. Sometimes referred to as a heat sheet or meet programme.

Pull Buoy: A floatation device used for pulling by swimmers in practice.

Qualifying Time: Qualifying time necessary to compete in a particular event and/or competition.

Race: A single swimming competition event.

Referee: The head official in charge of a swim meet.

Registered: Enrolled and paid member of Swim Alberta.

Relay: An event in which 4 swimmers compete together as a team to achieve on time.

Sanctioned Meet: All competitions in which records may be set and official times may be obtained, must be sanctioned (= approved officially) by Swim Alberta.

Scratch: To withdraw from an event in a competition.

Seed: Assign the swimmers to heats and lanes according to their submitted or preliminary times.

Session: Portion of a meet distinctly separated from other portions by time.

Shave: The process of removing all arm, leg and exposed torso hair to decrease the "drag" or resistance of the body moving through the water. Used only by senior swimmers at important meets.

Short Course or SC: A 25 metre long pool in which most competitions during the winter are held.

Split: A swimmer's intermediate time in a race. Splits are registered every 50m and are used to determine if a swimmer is on a planned pace. Under certain conditions, initial splits may also be used as official times.

Sprint: Describes the shorter events (50 and 100m); in training, to swim as fast as possible for a short distance.

Start: The beginning of a race. The dive used to begin a race.

Starter: The official in charge of signaling the beginning of a race and insuring that all swimmers have a fair takeoff.

Stand up: The command given by the starter or referee to release the swimmers from their starting position.

Step down: The command given by the starter or referee to have the swimmers move off the blocks. Usually this command is a good indication that everything is not right for the race to start.

Streamline: The position used to gain maximum distance during a start and/or push-off from the wall in which the swimmer's body is as tight and straight as it can be.

Stroke: There are four competitive strokes, butterfly, backstroke, freestyle, breaststroke.

Stroke Judge: The official positioned at the side of the pool, walking the length of the course as the swimmers race. If the stroke judge sees something illegal they report to the referee and the swimmer may be disqualified.

Swim-off: In a prelims/finals type competition a race after the scheduled event to break a tie. The only circumstance that warrants a swim-off is to determine which swimmer makes finals or an alternate, otherwise the tie stands.

Taper: The final preparation phase. As part of this phase, and prior to major competitions, older and more experienced swimmers will shave their entire body to reduce resistance and heighten sensation in the water.

Time Card: The card issued to each swimmer prior to each race, on which splits and the final time are recorded.

Timed Final: Competition in which only heats are swum and final placings are determined by those times.

Time Standard: A time set by a provincial association that a swimmer must achieve for qualification or recognition.

Time Trial: A practice race which is not part of a regular competition. Time trials may be sanctioned and used to qualify for specific meets.

Timer: The volunteers sitting behind the starting block/finish end of the pool, who are responsible for getting watch times on events and activating the backup buttons for the timing system.

Touch Out: To reach the touch pad and finish first in a race.

Touch Pad: A large sensitive board at the end of each lane where a swimmer's touch is registered and sent electronically to the timing system.

Transfer: The act of leaving one club and going to another. 30 days of unattached status is required before the swimmer can represent the new club.

Tri-meet: A meet with three teams competing for points.